Tales Retold for easy Reading

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TALES RETOLD FOR EASY READING

TALES OF THE ANCIENTS



PEGASUS (*see p.* 71)

TALES RETOLD FOR EASY READING

First Series

TALES OF THE ANCIENTS

Retold by D. FULLERTON

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FOREWORD

It is said that in ancient Greece and Rome, thousands of years ago, there were many gods and goddesses who were loved or feared by the people.

These gods and goddesses were supposed to live on the top of Mount Olympus from which they used to come down from time to time to help or harm human beings. There was Zeus, the King of the gods, and Hera his Queen. Venus, or Aphrodite, was the goddess of beauty, and Athene ruled over learning and the arts. Mars, the god of war, and Apollo, the god of the sun, Artemis, goddess of speed and hunting, and Poseidon, god of the sea, were among the strongest and most important of the gods. Besides these, there were hundreds of others, less known and not so powerful.

In many books are mentioned also the *heroes*[1] of Greece and Rome, famous men whose deeds of courage and bravery made them known all over the ancient world. The stories of the gods and goddesses and the great men of Greece and Rome were written down and continue to be enjoyed by people of all ages and every nation.

[1] heroes *n.* = men admired for noble qualities.

LIST OF PRONUNCIATIONS

In Greek names, *ch* is pronounced as *k*, and final *e* as *i*. *c* is pronounced as *k* except when it is followed by *e*, *i* or *y*, when it is pronounced as *s*. The sign ˘ over a vowel means that it is short. The sign ¯ over a vowel means that it is long. e̅u̅ = ū, a̅e̅ and o̅e̅ = ē, e̅i̅ = ī.

FOREWORD

Oly′mpus
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Athē′ne
Apo′llō
A′rtemis
Poseī′don

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Perse′phone
Tāē′narus

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Ae′geus
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Hē′lios
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Symplē′gadēs
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Alci′nŏus
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Ace′tes
Hē′raclēs
Ca′stor
Polydēū′cēs
O′rphēūs
Meleā′ger
Pē′leus
Le′mnos
Hypsi′pyle
Cȳ′zicus
My′sia
Hȳ′las
A′mycus
Salmyde′ssus
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Promē′theus
Aīe′tēs
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Hermin′ius
Spū′rius
La′rtius
A′stur

I

CUPID AND PSYCHE

The lovely Psyche

THE king of a certain country in ancient Greece had three daughters. Each one was beautiful, but the youngest, Psyche, was said to be lovelier even than Venus, the goddess of beauty herself. Wherever Psyche went, people would turn round to look at her, for no one believed that such loveliness could be human.

Venus was angry with Psyche for being so beautiful and wished to harm her in some way. She therefore called her son Cupid, the god of love, and said to him, 'Go and search for Psyche. When you have found her, take one of your magic arrows and shoot her, so that she may fall in love with the ugliest creature on earth.'

Cupid flew away and found Psyche in her father's castle. He watched her playing with her friends, and so lovely did she look that Cupid decided he could never hurt her.

Psyche grew up. Her sisters were married and the time came for Psyche herself to take a husband. The king, her father, went to the *oracle*[1] of Apollo to ask him whom his daughter should marry. Meanwhile the people of the city waited with interest to hear who would be the husband of their princess. Their surprise

[1] oracle *n.* = place where priests give advice.

and sadness was great when the king returned with an unhappy face. 'My people,' he said, 'I have terrible news for you. The oracle says that Psyche must be left on a mountain-side, where she will be married to a horrible *monster*.'[1] Everyone was very sad and unhappy to hear this, but the oracle could not be disobeyed, and so Psyche was dressed in her best clothes and left on the top of a high mountain. She cried and cried until at last she fell asleep in the shade of a large rock.

As she lay there, Cupid flew by. Once more he was struck by her beauty, and his heart was touched by the sad look on her face as she slept. Cupid decided that Psyche could not be left to become the wife of the monster, and so he picked her up and carried her off to his own castle.

The magic castle

Psyche awoke in the morning and found herself in a wonderful room full of golden chairs and tables. She was so surprised that she thought she was dreaming, and shut her eyes again. But the room was really there. Nobody was to be seen. Psyche got up and called out, 'Where am I?' Immediately a voice from near by answered, 'You are in your own castle. Everything is yours. Only ask, and anything you want shall be brought to you.' Psyche, feeling more and more surprised, said, 'May I have some food,

[1] monster *n.* = a huge, unnatural animal or person.

please, for I am very hungry?' No sooner had she spoken, than dishes of wonderful fruit and meats appeared in the room; a table was laid by unseen hands and a rich meal was ready for her immediately. Psyche ate the fruit and looked out of the window, where she saw a wonderful garden, full of flowers.

All day long she wandered through the castle and its grounds, without seeing anybody. Unseen hands were always ready to give her what she asked for, and voices of unseen people would answer any question she asked. When the evening came and the sun set, Psyche heard another deeper, finer voice come and talk to her, telling her that he loved her. Night after night she heard the same voice, until she came to love it and promised to marry the man to whom it belonged.

The invisible husband

Psyche was very happy with her *invisible*[1] husband but she longed to see his face, and one evening she begged him to tell her who he was. But the voice answered, 'Psyche, you may have anything you want by just asking for it, but you must never try to see my face. If you do, you must leave here and never see me again.'

So Psyche continued to live her life alone in the lovely castle, until one day her husband asked her whether she would like to see her

[1] invisible *adj.* = unable to be seen.



Rome
I T A L Y
Mt Olympus
Iolcus
Calydon
Ithaca
Athens
Corinth
Argos
Tiryns
Scylla
Charybdis
SICILY
or
Trinacria
M e d i t e r r a n
A F R
0 50 100 200 300
English Miles


Caucasus Mountains
COLCHIS
Black Sea
Symplegades
ydessus
ASIA
MINOR
Cyzicus
Hellespont
Troy
LYCIA
Rhodes
CYPRUS
n
Sea
EGYPT
C A
R. Nile
E. G. Perman

sisters again. Psyche was overjoyed at the thought and laughed happily. The next day the two sisters arrived, carried on the arms of the wind. They were delighted to see Psyche again and surprised to see her living in such a wonderful castle. For several hours they wandered about, admiring the lovely golden furniture.

'Where is your husband, Psyche?' they asked. 'Are we not to see him?'

Psyche felt rather ashamed when she replied, 'I have never seen my husband. He only visits me in the dark. I do not even know his name.'

The sisters laughed. 'If he will not let you see him,' they said, 'he must surely be the monster that the oracle spoke of.'

The sisters left the next day and Psyche was worried by all that they had said. She was now quite determined to see her husband, and so, that night, when he was asleep, she lit the lamp and held it over him. Instead of a monster, she saw Cupid, the god of love, the most beautiful creature in the world. Psyche was so excited that she dropped the lamp and a drop of burning *oil*[1] fell on Cupid. At once he awoke, and cried to Psyche, 'You have done the one thing I asked you not to do. Did you not have enough to make you happy? Instead of leaving you to a monster, I married you. Now I must leave you and you will never see me again.'

[1] oil *n.* = a thick liquid used in lamps.

and, so saying, he spread his wings and flew away.

Psyche threw herself down and cried, 'Cupid, Cupid, come back! Forgive me!' but there was only silence in the castle and no one answered her voice. Poor Psyche determined that she would go and look for her husband, even if she had to search all over the world.

Psyche in prison

At this time Venus discovered that Cupid had not obeyed her commands, so she threw him into prison and sent some of her *slaves*[1] to find Psyche. They found her, searching for Cupid, and brought her to the Court of Venus. When Venus saw Psyche, she was angry and was most unkind to her. The poor girl was thrown into a tiny prison, where she was beaten and given very little food.

Every day some very difficult work was given to her, work so difficult that she could never have done it. But she was so lovely that all the animals and birds were willing to help her. One day Venus sent a dozen bags of different seeds into the prison; the seeds were poured out and mixed with one another, then Psyche was told to separate them and put each kind back in its proper bag by sunset. Although she could not do this, some ants came to her in the prison and said, 'Psyche, you are so good

[1] slave *n.* = a person obliged to work without pay for another person, to whom he belongs.

and so beautiful that we will help you.' Thousands of other ants came along and each carried a seed of corn, so that by evening all the bags were full.

Her next duty was to climb to the top of a high mountain and to fill a pot with water from a spring there. The spring was guarded by a terrible snake, who would allow no one to pass. Psyche was wondering how to reach the spring, when suddenly she heard a voice calling from the sky, 'Psyche, Psyche!' Psyche looked up and saw a great bird come down from the sky. Taking the pot from her hands, the bird flew over the snake and filled the pot with water. Psyche after thanking the bird carried the pot of water to Venus.

Psyche is sent to the Underworld

Venus was surprised and angry that the girl succeeded in obeying all these commands, so she determined to give her some impossible work to do. She put into Psyche's hands a silver box. 'You must take this to Persephone, Queen of the Underworld. Ask her to fill it with beauty and then bring it back here.'

Psyche began to cry, for she believed that this was quite impossible. Sadly she climbed to the top of a high tower and was just going to throw herself down from the top when she heard a voice coming from the stones. 'Do not kill yourself, Psyche,' it said. 'It is not impossible for you to go down to the Underworld. You must go to the

City of Taenarus, and there you will find a way down. But you must take with you two cakes made with *honey*,[1] and two copper coins. Whatever you do, do not speak a word to anyone, or you will never return to the upper earth again.'

Psyche felt much happier when she heard this, and at once set off for Taenarus. There she found the dark and dreadful cave that leads to the Underworld. At first she was frightened to go, but, becoming braver, she went inside and walked farther and farther into the darkness. Soon she came to a smooth black river ; at the bank was a man, dressed in black, standing in a boat. He did not speak, and Psyche, who was very frightened, gave him one of the copper coins. The man rowed her to the other side of the river and left her there. Once more Psyche walked down a long passage, where there was only a thin grey light, until she was almost before the gates of Persephone's castle. Suddenly she saw a terrible dog with three heads running towards her. She quickly threw him one of the cakes which she was carrying and the dog let her pass by. Now Psyche came to the dark castle of Persephone. The Queen was sitting in a great room, so high that Psyche could not see the *ceiling*.[2] Everywhere there was a sad silence and the room was full of dark shadows. Psyche would have died from fear, but she heard Cupid's voice in her ear, telling her that all

[1] honey *n.* = a sweet liquid collected by bees from flowers.
[2] ceiling *n.* = the upper covering of a room.

2

would soon be well. She therefore walked towards the throne on which Persephone was sitting and bowed to her.

'Why does a human girl dare to come to the castle of Persephone?' asked the Queen sadly, but Psyche, remembering that she must not speak, said nothing and held up the silver box in her hands.

'Give it to me,' said Persephone.

Psyche gave it to her, but she was so frightened that she did not dare to look at what was being placed in the box.

Psyche returns to earth

'Now you may go,' said the Queen. Psyche took the box and ran off as fast as she could into the darkness. Once more the three-headed dog sprang out at her, and she threw it the other honey-cake. Again she came to the river and gave her last coin to the man in black, who rowed her across the river once more. In the far distance she could see the sunlight coming in at the mouth of the cave. Psyche ran towards it joyfully and came out into the green fields, laughing with happiness.

After walking a little way, Psyche wished to see what was in the silver box. She opened it and in a moment fell to the ground, for the box contained not beauty, but everlasting sleep.

Yet Cupid, who had escaped from the prison where his mother had thrown him, came down from Mount Olympus and woke her from her



PSYCHE GIVING THE BOX TO THE QUEEN OF THE UNDERWORLD

deep sleep. Then, spreading his wings, he carried her off to the place where the gods lived. Psyche and Cupid begged the gods to forgive them, and in the end they did so, and allowed Psyche to become a goddess. So Cupid and Psyche lived on Olympus, enjoying great happiness, after all the suffering through which they had passed.

II

THE STORY OF THESEUS

King Minos

On the island of Crete, in the Mediterranean, lived a clever and learned people while the Greeks on the mainland were still almost wild. In Crete there ruled for many years a king of great fame, called Minos. Minos was known throughout the world for his wisdom and justice. Every seven years he left his palace to live for some time in a cave, where he was visited by Zeus, the father of the gods, who taught him wisdom and the law.

At one time Minos took part in a war against his brothers, which he won with the help of Poseidon, the god of the sea. Minos wished to thank the gods for their help. In those days the custom was to make a thank-offering or sacrifice to the gods. Minos could not find



anything fine or beautiful enough to sacrifice, so he prayed to the gods to send him something. Poseidon answered his prayer by sending a wonderfully beautiful white *bull,* which rose out of the sea and lay down at the king's feet. The animal was so beautiful that Minos felt that he could not sacrifice it ; instead, he sacrificed a fine bull of his own and kept the white one for himself.

Poseidon was naturally very angry when he saw that Minos had not kept faith with him. He therefore caused the bull to become mad.

The animal destroyed everything it saw, tearing up the *crops,*[1] pushing down houses and killing people until it became the fear of the countryside.

Minos' punishment, however, was not yet at an end, for Pasiphae, his wife, gave birth to a terrible monster, with the body of a man and the head of a bull. At that time Minos had sent his elder son Androgeus to Athens to take part in the games that were held by Aegeus the King. Minos had received no news of his son for a long time, when there arrived at the court a certain clever *architect*[2] from Athens, Daedalus by name.

Androgeus is killed

Daedalus was brought before Minos, who said to him, 'Give me news about my son, for it is many months since I have heard from him.'

[1] crops *n.* = growing corn and other food plants.
[2] architect *n.* = a man who plans houses.

‘Androgeus has won all the games that were held by Aegeus, King of Athens,’ replied Daedalus. While the architect was speaking, Minos noticed a very sad look on his face.

‘Tell me what more you know of my son,’ he said quickly.

‘Your son is dead, King Minos,’ replied Daedalus. ‘The King of Athens was angry that all the prizes were won by Androgeus, a stranger to the city. So angry was he that he sent Androgeus out to try and destroy a mad bull. Your son was killed at once by the wild animal.’

Minos was overcome with sadness and anger. He called his ships and made war on Athens. For many months Minos’s army remained outside the walls of Athens, until there was no more food in the city and it was conquered. Minos demanded that every ninth year seven boys and seven girls should be sent to Crete, where they would be thrown to the Minotaur and eaten. The Minotaur was the monster-child, half bull, half man, of Minos and Pasiphae. Every year the Minotaur had grown more wild, until he could no longer be kept in the palace. Minos, advised by Daedalus, had built an open prison, full of endless turning paths and surrounded by huge grey rocks. One who entered the prison could never find his way out again ; he would wander on and on, lose his way amongst all the turns until the Minotaur found him and put an end to his life.

Ariadne, the lovely daughter of Minos begged

her father to stop sending to Athens for the boys and girls every nine years, but the King had become very cruel and would not listen to her.

Ariadne sees Theseus

Once more the Athenian ship arrived, carrying its fourteen unhappy boys and girls. Ariadne watched the prisoners as they were taken on shore. One of them interested her, a tall young man with fair hair who stood away from the others, watching the scene proudly. Ariadne sent her servant to find out who he was. The servant returned after some time and told her this story:

The young man was Theseus, the son of Aegeus, King of Athens. As soon as he grew up, Theseus determined to free the country from its great evil, the payment of boys and girls to the Minotaur.

When the time came to see who should be sent to Crete, Theseus went to Aegeus and said, 'Let me go, my father, for I will kill the Minotaur and you will never more have to send any boys and girls from Athens to be eaten by it.'

'Do not go, Theseus,' replied Aegeus, 'for you may never return, and you are my only son.'

'I am sure that I can kill the Minotaur,' said Theseus. 'If I am successful, I will put a white sail on the returning ship, instead of the black one which it now carries.'

It was Theseus, then, who interested Ariadne so much when he landed in Crete. Minos received him with the honour due to a king's son, and said, 'Why have you, a prince of Athens, come with the other prisoners to Crete?'

'I have come to kill the Minotaur,' replied Theseus.

'Do not be so foolish,' said the King angrily, 'you cannot kill the Minotaur. Return, now, to Athens, while the way is still open to you.'

But the boy's mind was made up, and he said, 'With the help of Poseidon, I shall succeed.'

Minos was surprised to hear Poseidon's name, for he had every reason to fear the god. 'Let us see if Poseidon will help you now,' he said, and, taking off his *ring*, he threw it into the sea. 'See if you can find the ring in the sea,' he ordered Theseus. Theseus jumped into the sea and in a moment reappeared with the ring. Minos was afraid.



Meanwhile Ariadne had been watching Theseus with the greatest admiration; she knew that she loved him. All day she wondered how she could help him to escape. Theseus, who had seen the prison, was wondering how he was going to succeed. In Athens it had seemed a simple matter to kill the Minotaur. Here in Crete the difficulties became terrible. With

what could he kill the Minotaur? How would he find his way out of the endless prison? Sadly Theseus stood, wondering what to do, when he heard a footstep and saw the lovely Ariadne at his side.

Ariadne helps Theseus

'Theseus,' she said, 'I can help you. I am tired of my father's cruelty. You must kill the Minotaur, but you cannot do it without my help. To-morrow at sunrise we will go to the prison together. I will give you a sword. Here is a ball of *thread;* we must tie it to a rock at the entrance of the prison and unroll it as we go, so that we can find our way out once more.'



Theseus was so delighted to hear that Ariadne would help him that he fell in love with her.

Next morning, before the sun was up, Theseus met Ariadne at the gates of the prison. A wall of huge steep *cliffs* rose above them. One narrow place gave entrance to the prison. Ariadne tied the thread to a stone and, letting it unroll as she walked, followed Theseus down the narrow passage between the rocks. Suddenly they came to an open space of wild grey rocks and leafless



trees ; paths led in every direction and there was no sign of life but for some great black birds. Theseus and Ariadne followed the nearest path ; it turned in and out of the rocks, joining other paths, running under the cliffs and turning back



THESEUS AND THE MINOTAUR

on itself again. Theseus realized that, but for Ariadne's help, he would have been hopelessly lost in the prison. At last they arrived in a round open space, from which paths led off in every direction. The air was full of smoke and the ground was covered with human bones. Behind some burned bushes something moved

and made a terrible sound, half like the cries of a madman, half like the noise of a bull. Ariadne was very frightened and ran to hide behind a rock. Theseus marched towards the bushes and called to the Minotaur to come out and fight.

Theseus kills the Minotaur

From behind the bushes appeared a creature terrible to see. Its head was like that of a huge bull ; the eyes were red, and from the nose came fire and smoke. Its body was that of a great man. The Minotaur gave a terrible cry and rushed at Theseus with its head down. Theseus stood waiting, sword in hand, until the Minotaur was nearly upon him, then, stepping away lightly, he struck his sword through the creature's neck. With a cry of pain it turned on him once more, but Theseus drove the sword right into its heart, and the creature fell dead upon the ground.

Ariadne, feeling very frightened, had been watching from behind the rock. Now she ran to Theseus and begged him to hurry away, for darkness was falling and they must escape before Minos discovered what had happened. The sun had set and they had great difficulty in finding their way out of the prison. Ariadne kept her hand on the thread and for hours they wandered about amongst the cliffs and rocks, unable to see their way in the dark. At last they came to the entrance of the prison ; Ariadne was tired out and Theseus carried her

down to the Athenian ship. The Athenians were overjoyed to see Theseus return again and to hear that he had killed the Minotaur. They rowed away quickly before anyone on shore realized what had happened.

Daedalus flies away

Minos was very angry when he heard the news; he decided that it was all the fault of Daedalus, the architect. He therefore shut him and his son, Icarus, in the prison, believing that they would die for want of food But Daedalus was very clever. For some time he had been trying to learn how to fly. He now made some wings of *wax*[1] for himself and Icarus, and together they flew out of the prison and away from Crete. Icarus was so pleased with his new power that he rose higher and higher until he came too near the sun, whose warmth melted the wax in the wings and Icarus fell into the sea, where he died.

By this time Theseus and Ariadne were nearing Greece. Now that he was so successful, Theseus realized that he had never loved Ariadne. Her help made him feel thankful towards her, and this feeling he mistook for love. Ariadne, who truly loved Theseus, was most unhappy. One day they landed at Naxos, to get water, and Ariadne went sadly to sleep on the shore, Theseus sailed away, leaving her on the island, and she never saw him again.

[1] wax *n.* = soft sticky material made by bees for building their homes.

Theseus forgets his promise

Theseus now forgot his promise to Aegeus that he would put a white sail on the ship if he returned. Every day Aegeus climbed to the top of a tower, to watch for the returning ship. The black sail appeared in the harbour and Aegeus, believing Theseus to be dead, threw himself from the tower and was killed. Theseus, therefore, became King of Athens.

Theseus met many *adventures*[1] after becoming King of Athens. He joined Jason's voyage in search of the Golden *Fleece*;[2] he fought the Amazons, a race of women fighters, and brought back as his wife Antiope, an Amazon princess. His great friend was Pirithous, who fell in love with Persephone, the Queen of the Underworld. Theseus and Pirithous followed her down to the Underworld, a thing that no human being was allowed to do, so they were tied to a rock and forced to remain there until Heracles saved them many years afterwards.

III

THE RETURN OF ODYSSEUS

Odysseus sails from Troy

For ten long years Odysseus the wanderer, the King of Ithaca, had fought at the *Siege*[3] of

1 adventure *n.* = dangerous happenings.
2 fleece *n.* = the skin and wool of a sheep.
3 siege *n.* = attack on a town.

Troy. When the Trojan war was over, Odysseus wanted very much to see his wife, Penelope, again and to return to his own country. So he set sail with his followers, and many were their adventures before they came home to Ithaca once more.

The wind carried the ships to the city of Cicon, where they landed and fought a great battle with the people there. In the end, the heroes were nearly beaten, and Odysseus called them to sail away again quickly. Almost at once a high wind arose, and they were carried south for many days until they came to the land of the *lotus* eaters. These were men who ate the



flowers of the lotus, which caused them to lie dreaming in the sun all the year round. Some of the sailors went on shore and tasted the sweet flower ; then they wanted to stay in the land and become lotus eaters themselves. It was only with the greatest difficulty that Odysseus forced the men back to the ship, and made them row away again. The ship was in a part of the sea that no one knew, and the heroes believed themselves to be miles from any other land, so that everyone was happy when an island was seen in the distance. With cries of joy the sailors went on shore and walked about, eating

delightful fruit and drinking fresh water, without meeting anybody at all.

The giant's cave

That night they slept on the shore and the next morning they came across a large cave, with huge footmarks leading up to it. Odysseus determined to go inside and see what sort of a person lived there. His men were afraid and tried to make him go away, but he would not go. They entered the cave, where they found many sheep and goats standing about. After waiting for some time, they heard a great noise outside the cave, and a huge giant came in. It was one of the Cyclops, a people that had only one large eye, placed in the middle of the *forehead*.[1] The giant walked into the cave, driving his sheep before him, and rolled a great stone across the entrance of the cave.

The men with Odysseus were very frightened when they saw this, for now they could not escape. The Cyclop looked around the cave; at first he could only see a little, for it was nearly dark, but then he noticed the men sitting in the corner. 'Who are you?' he shouted. Odysseus replied, 'We are Greeks, returning from the Siege of Troy, and we ask you for the kindness that is due to all strangers.'

In answer the giant picked up two of the Greeks, broke them into pieces, and cooked them for his supper. After that he lay down and went

[1] forehead *n.* = front of the head, above the eyes.

to sleep. The next morning he moved the stone away from the entrance to the cave, went out with his sheep and goats, and put the stone back in its place again.

The giant drinks the wine

After he had gone, Odysseus and the Greeks took the giant's stick, which had been left behind, and sharpened it to a point. The giant returned in the evening and took two more of the Greeks for his supper. But now Odysseus had thought of a plan. He went up to the giant and offered him a bowl of some wonderful strong wine which Apollo had given him. The giant liked the wine very much and drank a lot of it. Turning to Odysseus, he asked what his name was. 'I am called No-man,' said Odysseus.

'No-man ?' said the giant, 'that is a funny name. However, I will eat you the last of all, because you have given me this wine that I like so much.' So saying, he began to feel very tired as a result of all the wine he had drunk and, lying down, he went to sleep.

Odysseus and his men took the stick and made it red-hot, then they walked slowly and quietly up to Polyphemus the giant, and pushed the pointed stick through the middle of his one great eye.

With a terrible shout of pain, Polyphemus jumped up and ran to the mouth of the cave, calling the other Cyclops.

'What is the matter ?' they called. 'Is anything wrong ?'

'No-man has hurt me, No-man has hurt me,' cried Polyphemus, running round the cave.

'Well then, that is all right,' said the other giants, and went away again.

The Greeks escape

Now Polyphemus sat at the mouth of the cave, so that none of the Greeks should escape, but Odysseus had another plan. He took three sheep, roped them together, and then tied one of his men under them ; he did the same with all the men, until only he was left. Then he took the largest of the sheep and tied himself under it. In the morning the giant let the sheep out into the fields, and the Greeks escaped to their ship, taking the sheep with them. When they reached the ship, Odysseus called back to Polyphemus to say that if anyone asked how he had lost his eye, he could say that it was Odysseus who did it. Polyphemus was very angry and requested his father Poseidon, the sea-god, to prevent Odysseus from reaching his home again. So Poseidon brought every sort of trouble and unhappiness into the life of Odysseus.

When the Greeks rowed away they did not know where they were, but went on for several days until they came to the island ruled by Aeolus, the King of the Winds. Aeolus received Odysseus and his company very kindly. They stayed a month with him. When they left, Aeolus gave Odysseus a bag. 'In this bag,'

he said, 'I have put all the winds except the west wind, which will blow your ship gently to Ithaca. You must never open the bag and let the other winds out, or they will destroy your ship.'

The winds escape

They sailed on quietly until they could see Ithaca. Odysseus was tired and went to sleep, while the men asked each other what was in the bag given to Odysseus by Aeolus. They determined to look inside it. One of them went up to the bag and opened it. At once, with a terrible noise, the eleven winds rushed out. The boat was nearly upset, and Odysseus awoke in great fear. He saw that they would be driven far away from Ithaca once more.

After two or three days in an awful storm, the boat was driven back to the island of Aeolus. Odysseus did not know what he should say to the King after all his kindness, and indeed Aeolus was very angry. 'You must never return to my island again' he said to Odysseus, although it was not the fault of Odysseus that the winds had escaped. The heroes left the island. The winds blew them on for several days until they came to Lamos. Two of the Greeks went on shore, where they saw a young woman taller than any they had known before ; she was almost a giantess. They asked her who lived on the island, but she said nothing and signed for them to follow her. She led them to

a large castle belonging to her father, Antiphas, the King. Antiphas was a giant. When he saw the Greeks, he called out loudly and many other giants came running in. They all rushed down to the harbour, where they picked up rocks and threw them at the Greek ships, sinking them all except the one in which Odysseus was.

Circe's island

Sadly Odysseus sailed away, wondering what he would do without all his friends. The ship came to the Aeaean island, where Circe the daughter of the Sun lived. They could see her white castle shining in the woods. Odysseus sent several men on shore, headed by Eurylochus. They came to the gardens of the castle, where all sorts of animals were to be seen. Inside the building Circe was singing. The Greeks went in and Circe came to meet them. Eurylochus stayed outside and watched. Circe gave each of the men a cup of sweet wine, in which she had put medicine. When they had drunk the wine, Circe touched them with her stick and they were all turned into pigs. With a hard smile Circe shut them in and went away. Eurylochus had seen all this and was angry and afraid. He ran down to the ship at once to tell Odysseus.

Odysseus came on shore and walked towards the castle. Suddenly Hermes, the messenger of the gods, appeared before him. In his hand he held a plant. 'Take this plant,' he said

to Odysseus, 'and keep it with you. It will protect you from all Circe's medicines.' Odysseus was very glad and continued his way towards the castle. Circe met him at the door and offered him a cup of wine containing the medicine. Odysseus drank it and Circe touched him with her stick, thinking to turn him into a pig like the others. But the plant protected Odysseus, and he drew out his *sword* and said he would kill her unless she changed the pigs back into men again. Circe was very frightened, and fell at his feet, for she now knew that he was Odysseus. She went out and touched all the pigs with her stick and turned them back into men again. Then she returned and made a splendid meal for Odysseus and his men, while she sang to them with her wonderful voice.



The Greeks wish to leave

For a whole month the Greeks stayed with Circe, enjoying themselves and leading a lazy life, until some of the men wished to return to their homes once more. At first Circe did not want to let Odysseus go, but when she saw that he was determined to leave, she told him that he must talk to the spirits of the dead and ask for their help. So Odysseus took his ship and sailed to the dark place where Persephone was

buried. There he made a sacrifice of animals, and many spirits came from the Underworld to talk to him. 'You must continue your voyage for a long while, Odysseus,' they said, 'and all will go well with you, so long as none of the Greeks harm the cattle belonging to Helios, who lives on the island of Thrinacia.'

Odysseus sailed back quickly to Circe's island and told her what had been said. She advised Odysseus how to escape the other dangers of his voyage, and then filled the ship with food and drink and sent the Greeks on their way. After several days at sea they came to the rocks of the Sirens. The Sirens were women with voices of wonderful beauty who called passing sailors to come to them. When the men came, the Sirens killed and ate them, but their voices were so lovely that no man could help answering their call. As the ship came near to the Sirens, Odysseus remembered what Circe had said. He took some wax and put small pieces in the ears of all the Greeks, so that they should not hear the voices of the Sirens. He himself was tied down to the ship, so that he could not move, even if he wanted to.

The ship came close to the island of the Sirens, but the Greeks rowed on, for they could not hear the lovely voices. Odysseus could hear them and he saw the Sirens lying in a field full of flowers. He tried hard to go to them, but he was tied too well and he had to remain where he was until the island of the Sirens was out of hearing.

Dangerous rocks

No sooner had they escaped one danger than another one appeared. In the distance could be seen two great rocks—the Symplegades. As ships passed by, the rocks would close in and break them to pieces. No ship had ever been known to escape them. Without Circe's advice, Odysseus's ship would have been destroyed, but, as it came near the rocks, Odysseus caused a bird to fly in front of the ship. The rocks came together and killed the bird, and, as they separated again, the Greeks quickly rowed through.

Two other terrible dangers were Scylla and Charybdis. Scylla was a great monster with six heads, who would carry away passing travellers and eat them. As the heroes' ship sailed past her, Scylla stretched out one of her long heads and picked up several of the men who were rowing the ship, and carried them off to her cave, where she ate them. There was nothing that Odysseus could do to help the poor men, so the Greeks rowed on slowly and sadly.

A short distance farther on was Charybdis, the *whirlpool*[1] which pulled ships down into its centre. They just managed to escape this monster, because the water stood still for a moment.

The next place they came to was the island of Thrinacia. Odysseus did not want to land on the island, for he remembered that the spirits advised them not to touch the cattle there.

1 whirlpool *n.* = a fast current of water moving in a circle.

But Eurylochus and the others were tired, and said that they could not continue rowing any longer, so they urged Odysseus to go on shore.

The Greeks are killed

After a time they had no food left, and the sailors determined to kill and eat the cattle. This they did while Odysseus was asleep. But the gods were very angry, and as soon as the Greeks were on the ship once more a bad storm came down, and the boat was overturned. Everyone except Odysseus was lost. He saved his life by holding on to a piece of wood, and was carried over the sea for many days without food or water until, tired out, he was thrown up on the shores of the island of Ogygia.

There he slept for many hours until he was found by the goddess Calypso, who lived on the island. Calypso took him to her home and gave him food and clothes, and cared for him in every possible way, for she loved him. For eight years Odysseus remained with Calypso, but he always wanted to return to Ithaca and his wife Penelope.

At last he felt he could remain no longer, and he prayed to Athene to help him. Athene heard his prayer and the gods sent Hermes to Calypso, to command her to let Odysseus go. Calypso made a large *raft*[1] and on it she put a quantity of food and sweet wine. So Odysseus

[1] raft *n.* = several pieces of wood tied together to form a kind of boat.

sailed thankfully away. For many days all went well, but then a great storm came and the raft was broken to pieces. For many hours Odysseus swam about until, when he was almost dead, he reached land. There he lay down and slept. When he awoke, he saw a lovely girl in white clothes standing by him. She was Nausicaa, the daughter of Alcinous, King of the land.

Odysseus arrives home

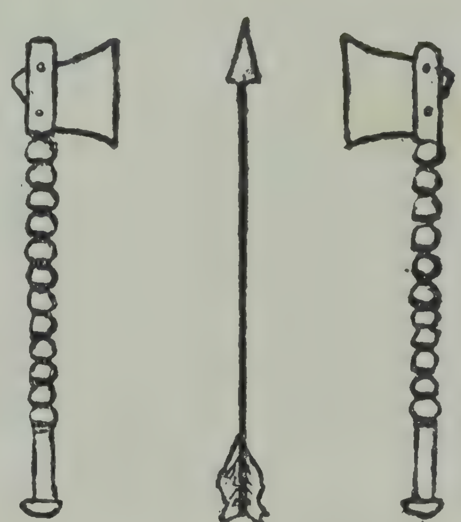
Alcinous and his Queen were very kind to Odysseus; they gave him fine new clothes and a ship to carry him back to Ithaca.



PENELOPE WEAVES A WEB

The wind took the ship gently to Ithaca, and Odysseus landed in his own dear country after being away for more than twenty years. He was going straight to his castle, when Athene appeared to him and warned him to wait for a little. The castle was full of men who wanted to marry Penelope. Penelope was very unhappy and did not know what to do. She was *weaving* a large *web,* for she had promised that she would decide which one she would marry when the web was finished. Every night she destroyed all that she had woven during the daytime.

But now the men were losing their patience and had become dangerous. Penelope was forced to promise that she would marry any man who could shoot an *arrow* through a hole between twelve *axes* that were to be set up in the room.



Odysseus shoots the arrow

During this time Odysseus found Telemachus, his son, and told him who he was. The boy was overjoyed to see his father again, for he knew that everything would now come all right. Odysseus put on the clothes of an old *shepherd*[1] and went into his own house. There he found many men making a loud noise and quarrelling.

[1] shepherd *n.* = a man who looks after sheep.

Odysseus told the servants to close all the doors so that no one could escape. He then called upon the other men to try and shoot the arrow between the axes. All of them tried, but none of them could do it, so Penelope began to feel hopeful.

Then Odysseus took his bow and arrow and at once shot the arrow through the space between the axes. Everyone stood still and looked at him with the greatest surprise. He quickly tore off the shepherd's clothes and, taking up his bow, let arrows fly among the men who were there. They tried to run away, but the doors were shut. In a few minutes every one of them was dead. Then Odysseus turned happily to Penelope. At first she did not recognize him, for he had changed so much in twenty years. But he talked to her gently about many things they had done when they were young, so that she knew him once more, and was very happy.

And so, after twenty unhappy years of travel, Odysseus was at home once more, and ruled Ithaca wisely and well.

IV

THE ARGONAUTS

The boy Jason

JASON'S voyage on his ship *Argo* in search of the Golden Fleece is a very famous Greek adventure story.

Jason's father, Aeson, who was a prince of Iolcus, had a brother called Pelias. Pelias was jealous of Aeson and wished to *seize*[1] the kingdom and kill Jason. Aeson heard about Pelias's plan and decided to send the boy Jason away to the mountains to be raised by old Chiron, the *Centaur*.[2] Jason lived for many years with Chiron, learning all the arts of war and courage.

One day when Jason was grown-up, Chiron called him. 'Jason,' he said, 'you have been with me for many years and the time has now come for you to leave me. Return to Iolcus and claim the kingdom that is yours. Remember all I have taught you and remember to respect the gods.'

Jason sadly said good-bye to Chiron and started on his journey. After a time, he came to a place where a fast stream ran down the mountain-side. On the bank stood a very old woman in dirty clothes. 'Kind Traveller,' said the old woman in a weak voice, 'will you help me to cross the stream? I have stood here all day, but no one will help me to cross, because I am an ugly old woman.'

'Of course, Mother, I will help you,' said Jason, smiling, and he picked her up in his arms and carried her across the stream. When he put her down, an extraordinary change came over the old woman; she grew tall and beautiful, and her old clothes changed into a dress of shining

1 seize *v.* = take by force.
2 centaur *n.* = an imaginary creature, half man, half horse.

white. So great was her beauty that Jason knew he must be in the presence of a goddess. She was Hera, the Queen of Heaven and the wife of Zeus. Jason bowed his head. The goddess smiled on him and slowly disappeared in a great white light. Jason went on his way, wondering greatly what this meant.

Jason arrives at Iolcus

While crossing the stream, Jason lost one of his shoes. He arrived in Iolcus and found that Pelias had seized the kingdom from Aeson. Jason went straight to the castle and demanded that the kingdom should be handed over to him. Pelias had been warned that he must fear a man who wore only one shoe, so as soon as he saw Jason he was frightened and wished to send him away as soon as possible. 'I will give up the kingdom to you,' he said, 'if you will bring me the Golden Fleece.' Jason had never heard of the Golden Fleece, so he went out into the town and asked what it was and where it was to be found. This is the story that was told to him.

Nephele, the goddess of Cloud, had married King Athamas. They had two children, Phrixus and Helle. After some years Athamas deserted Nephele and took a human wife called Ino. In order to punish Athamas, Nephele sent a *drought*[1] on the country, when no rain fell and all the rivers dried up. Ino told the king that the only way to save the country was to kill the

[1] drought *n.* = a long time without rain.

King's two children. She was just going to kill them when Nephele sent down to earth a *ram*[1] with a fleece of pure gold. The children jumped on to the ram's back and it flew away with them. Helle, the girl, fell off into the middle of the sea, but the ram carried Phrixus on to the kingdom of Colchis, where Acetes was king. Acetes received Phrixus kindly and took him to live in his castle. The ram was sacrificed and they hung its fleece on a tree where it was guarded by a great *dragon*[2] that never went to sleep.

A ship is built

It was often said in Greece that the most impossible thing in the world to obtain was the Golden Fleece, but Jason, who was young and simple, felt sure that he would find it without any difficulty.

The first thing to be done was to build a ship to carry him to Colchis; the second was to find a company of men to go with him. The ship was made by Argos and called the *Argo* after him. Never had a finer ship been built in Greece. Its wood was strong and its sails carried it quickly and gently over the sea.

As soon as it became known that Jason was setting out to search for the Golden Fleece, men came from all over Greece to join him. There were Heracles, Castor and Polydeuces, and Orpheus, who played such wonderful music that

1 ram *n.* = a he-sheep.
2 dragon *n.* = creature like a huge snake with wings.

he could charm the birds and animals with it, and Meleager and Peleus, Lyncias and many others of the bravest men in Greece. All came, wishing to have the chance of joining such a wonderful search. Fifty men took the oars under the command of Jason, and the ship left Iolcus on its long journey to Colchis.

The first stop was at Lemnos, an island where lived a nation of women who had killed all the men. The Argonauts stayed in the island for a long while as the guests of Hypsipyle, the Queen.

The battle at Cyzicus

The next stop was at Cyzicus, where they were kindly received by the King. They stayed on the island for some days and sailed away in the evening. But the wind drove them back to the island once more, in the middle of the night. The inhabitants thought that they were *robbers,*[1] and attacked them. In the darkness where no one could see, the King of the island was killed, and the islanders were driven back. The Argonauts rowed sadly away, for they had not wished to harm the kind king and his country. They sailed on for a few days and stopped at Mysia. There one of the company was lost. Hylas, a good-looking youth, bent down to a spring to get water. The water-*fairies,*[2] who lived in the spring, fell in love with him and pulled him down in the water to them. Heracles

1 robbers *n.* = men who steal (rob).
2 fairy *n.* = a being with magic powers.

searched all over the island for the boy, but Hylas's voice could not be heard through the water.

Once more the *Argo* continued its journey until it came to another country. This was the land of the giant Amycus. Amycus forced all travellers to box with him. But Amycus did not know that among the Argonauts was the greatest boxer in the world, Polydeuces. In the fight that took place Amycus was quickly beaten and was left, tied to a tree, in the same way as he himself had treated other travellers.

Blind King Phineus

At last the *Argo* came to Salmydessus, on the shores of the Black Sea, where lived the *blind*[1] King Phineus. Phineus was so wise that he alone could tell the Argonauts the way to Colchis. Jason went to the old king and said, 'We are searching for the Golden Fleece, O King, but we do not know where to look, nor which direction to take. Will you help us?'

'I will certainly help you,' replied Phineus, 'if you will help me too. My life is made miserable by the harpies, great black birds sent by the gods. Every time I sit down to eat, the harpies seize my food and fly away with it.'

The Argonauts drove the harpies away and Phineus, in return, warned them how to escape the many dangers that lay in the way of the Argonauts.

1 blind *adj.* = unable to see.

First they came to the Symplegades, two great rocks that stood at the entrance of the Black Sea. These were no ordinary rocks; they were the fear of every sailor in that part of the world, for, whenever a ship passed between them, they would rush together and break it to pieces. Jason had been warned by Phineus what to do. When they came fairly close to the rocks, he let fly a bird—the rocks closed together and killed it. As they drew apart again, the Argonauts rowed through as quickly as they could. The rocks rushed together again, but before they could meet, the Argonauts had escaped.

They stopped at many more ports, until they passed by the great Caucasus mountains. There they heard the cries of Prometheus, who had given Fire to men. For this he had been tied down by Zeus to the top of a mountain. Every day a great bird came and bit him.

They arrive at Colchis

Soon afterwards they reached Colchis, the land of the Golden Fleece. Jason went to the castle and demanded to see Aietes, the King. 'You have travelled far,' said Aietes, 'is there anything that you wish from my land?'

'I have travelled far,' answered Jason, 'through rough seas and past terrible dangers, in search of the Golden Fleece. I pray you, therefore, to give it to me.'

Aietes was amused. 'Your dangers are not yet past,' he said, 'for it is not easy to reach

the Golden Fleece. Before you may have it, you must catch two bulls with feet of brass and flaming breath. With them you must plough a field and sow it with the teeth of a dragon. As soon as the teeth are sown, armed men will jump up and attack you. They must all be killed. If you can do all this, then you shall have the Golden Fleece.'

Medea helps Jason

Jason lost hope. He had not the least idea how to do all these things. He walked up and down outside the castle, trying to find a way out of his difficulties. Suddenly he saw in front of him a beautiful young woman, with black hair and great dark eyes. It was Medea, the daughter of Aietes. Medea was supposed to be very clever with magic. Jason looked at her and felt that he had never seen anyone so beautiful as she. Neither had Medea ever seen anyone like Jason, and she loved his fair hair and grey eyes. That night she went to her secret room and prepared a wonderful liquid which she gave to Jason. He was to cover himself with it from head to foot and no harm could come to him. With the help of this wonderful liquid, Jason caught the flaming bulls and ploughed the field. Then he started to sow the dragon's teeth. As soon as they touched the ground, Jason was greatly surprised to see a man rise up from the ground and advance to attack him. Before he knew where he was,

a whole army was standing in the field, ready to fight him. Jason, as advised by Medea, picked up a rock and threw it amongst them. The soldiers immediately began to fight amongst themselves and within an hour they were all dead.

Jason returned to Aietes and demanded the Golden Fleece once more. Once more the King laughed and said that he could not give it. Jason must pass the sleepless dragon that guarded the tree where the Fleece hung.

Jason takes the Golden Fleece

Jason did not know how to get past the dragon. It lay beside the tree, a huge creature breathing fire and smoke, and it never went to sleep. Once again Jason asked Medea for help. Medea knew that if she helped Jason again, her father would never forgive her. Jason promised to marry her and take her home to Greece with him. Medea, who loved Jason, believed him, not knowing that it was against the laws of Greece for any man to marry a foreign woman.

Medea prepared a sweet cake in which she put some very strong medicine. Together she and Jason went to the tree where the Fleece hung, and threw the cake to the dragon. The dragon ate the cake and in a few minutes it fell asleep. Jason quickly seized the Fleece and ran down to the *Argo* with it. Medea stopped only for a moment to bring with her her young brother, Absyrtus, whom she loved very much. Quickly



MEDEA AND JASON

they rowed away, but not quickly enough, for they soon saw Aietes following them with many fast ships. Jason knew that the Argonauts could not fight against so many men, and he begged Medea once more to think of a way of saving them. Medea's answer was a famous and terrible one. She took her brother, Absyrtus, and killed him. Then she cut his body into small pieces and threw them one by one on to the water. Aietes saw that his little son had been killed and he stopped the ship sadly to pick up each piece. This delayed his ship for so long that the Argonauts were soon out of sight.

It is not known exactly how the Argonauts returned from Colchis. Some say that they pulled their boat overland, others say that they followed Medea's directions and sailed up a great river. After some long and dangerous journey they reached Iolcus once more.

King Pelias is killed

Jason found that his uncle Pelias had killed Aeson. Pelias refused to give up the throne, even though Jason had brought the Golden Fleece. The Argonauts only numbered fifty; they could do nothing against the armies of Pelias, so once more it was Medea who thought of a plan. She knew that Pelias, who was now old, wished to become young again, so she called his daughters and said, 'Your father, the King, wishes to become young once more. I, with my magic, can show you how to make him so.'

So saying, she took an old sheep, cut it into several pieces and put them into a pot of boiling water filled with medicine. At once there jumped out of the pot a young sheep. The daughters of Pelias went to the king and promised him that they could make him young once more. At first he was unwilling to let them try such an unpleasant method, but finally he allowed them to cut him up. His daughters put the pieces of his body in the pot, and waited for their father to appear once again as a young man, but of course nothing happened; Pelias was dead.

The young women ran to their brother and cried, 'Medea has made us kill our father.' Together they collected all the people of Iolcus, and drove Jason and Medea out of the city. The unhappy pair escaped to the court of Creon at Corinth. Jason was kindly received by the King, but Medea was looked upon as a foreigner. Any woman who was not a Greek was disliked in Corinth, and now Jason began to feel that he did not love Medea any more. He determined to get rid of her and to marry Glauce, the daughter of Creon. According to Greek law, Jason was not really married to Medea, because Medea was a foreigner. Medea was terribly unhappy about this, for she loved Jason greatly. Many times she told him of all that she had done for him and of the happy years that they had spent together. But Jason would not listen to her; she meant nothing to him now.

Glauce is poisoned

Medea determined that, if she was to be so unhappy, she would make Jason unhappy too. She pretended to feel very friendly towards Glauce, and sent her as a present a beautifully made *crown* and some lovely dresses. In the crown and the clothes was hidden a deadly *poison*.[1]



Glauce was delighted with the beautiful presents; she ran quickly to her room and put on the crown and a golden dress. Suddenly she felt a sharp pain—the poison had begun to work. Glauce fell to the floor, trying to take off the dress and crown. She could not, neither could her servants. Creon heard her cries and came running to see what was the matter. He caught Glauce in his arms; the poison passed from her to him and in a few moments father and daughter lay dead together. The servants fetched Jason, who knew at once that Medea had poisoned Glauce. In his anger Jason wanted to kill Medea, but he was too late. In his room lay the bodies of his two sons, killed by Medea in order to hurt Jason. Jason was overcome with sorrow; he stood with bowed head outside the palace when a noise of rushing wings was heard overhead. In the sky was a golden car drawn by winged horses. Medea sat in the carriage,

1 poison *n.* = anything harmful to the human body if eaten, drunk, or put next to the skin.

her face showing her hate. The flying carriage disappeared in the direction of Athens.

Jason remained for some time in Corinth; no one quite knows how he died, but it is generally believed that he met his death in the sea.

V

THE STORY OF MELEAGER

Meleager beats his father's enemies

When the Argonauts returned from helping Jason to bring back the Golden Fleece, Meleager, who was one of them, went back to his father Oeneus's house at Calydon. Oeneus told his son that he was at war with some wild people from the north, who had been sent by the goddess Artemis, because Oeneus had not made the usual sacrifice to her.

Meleager told his father of all the dangers he had passed through with the Argonauts, and said that he would take command of his father's armies and drive the enemy back. Many battles were fought and the enemy were completely beaten.

The goddess Artemis was angry that the armies she had sent against Calydon were destroyed, so she sent a great *boar*[1] which did terrible harm to the country. It killed men and women, carried off children, and destroyed the fields and gardens. Many tried to kill the boar,

1 boar *n.* = a male wild pig.

but they all lost their lives in doing so. Then Meleager called together a party of all the most famous fighters, to see if they could kill the boar. Among them was one woman, called Atalanta.

Atalanta

Now Atalanta was the daughter of King Schoeneus. Schoeneus wished all his children to be boys, so, when Atalanta was born, he ordered that she should be left on the mountain-side to die. The baby was found and brought up by a bear, and later on was taken by some hunters, with whom she learnt to be a huntress. Now that she was grown up she could ride and run and shoot an arrow better than most men could.

Atalanta was tall and beautiful, and many men wanted to marry her. She, however, said that she would only marry a man who could beat her in a race. Many tried, but none so far had succeeded.

When Meleager saw Atalanta, he admired her very much, but Meleager's mother, Althaea, and the other hunters did not. 'Why,' they asked, 'should a woman do the same things as a man? She is not made for such things.'

For two days they hunted the boar without finding him. On the third day they came to some large rocks and heard the boar behind them. Several of the hunters went up to the rocks and the boar rushed out and killed them. After that, the others waited for a while, not

knowing what to do, when suddenly the boar ran out again. Atalanta shot her arrow and hit the animal so that it fell, with the blood streaming from its head. Then Meleager rushed up and killed it. The men all shouted for joy; they took the animal's skin and gave it to Meleager, but he handed it to Atalanta, saying, 'It was your arrow that first hit the animal. Therefore the skin belongs to you.'

Atalanta is attacked

Now Meleager's two uncles, the brothers of Althaea, were very angry that the skin had been given to Atalanta, and they determined to take it away from her. The two men hid behind some trees and, as Atalanta came along, they attacked her. She tried to fight them, but could do nothing against two men. In a minute they would have taken the skin from her, but she called loudly for Meleager. Meleager was so angry when he saw what was happening, that he took up his sword and killed both his uncles.

The hunters returned from the forest, telling how Meleager had destroyed the boar. Althaea was sitting with Cleopatra, Meleager's wife, and the two women were saying that Meleager would become one of the most famous heroes of Greece.

Suddenly a noise of crying and shouting was heard outside the house. Althaea ran to the window, and saw the bodies of her two dead brothers being brought in. She asked what

had happened, and learned that they had been killed by Meleager in protecting Atalanta. At this Althaea threw herself on the ground and began to cry. 'Bring Meleager to his death,' she cried again and again to the gods, 'for he has killed my two brothers!' Suddenly she got up. Cleopatra watched her go sadly to a large and beautiful box that stood in the corner of the room. From the box she took a piece of wood, partly blackened and burned by fire. She held the wood in her hands for some time, looking at it strangely, and went to throw it into the fire. Then she turned to Cleopatra and said, 'With that wood, the life of my son burns away.' Cleopatra remembered the story of Meleager's birth, and she was afraid.

The three Fates

When Meleager was a baby, seven days old, Althaea was lying alone in her room, half asleep. She suddenly noticed that there were three strange women in the room; pale and tall they were, with long dark hair and dull grey dresses. Althaea knew that she was looking at the Fates, the three extraordinary sisters that held in their hands the power of life and death and of good and evil.

Turning, one of the sisters spoke to Althaea. 'You are happy to have a son, Althaea,' she said, 'but remember that he will live no longer than that piece of wood now burning in the fire.' Althaea jumped from her bed and seized the

piece of burning wood from the fire. Half of it was already burned black, so Althaea took a pot of water and poured it over the wood. After that she hid the half-burned wood away in a box.

The flame now took some time to reach the wood, which was old and wet. While the two women were watching it, they heard a great noise outside and voices calling, 'Where is Meleager ? Where is Meleager ?' A minute afterwards a man ran into the room and said, 'Tell us where we may find Meleager. The wild men are here again ; their armies are all around the city. Only Meleager can save us.'

Meleager came into the room. 'Come, Meleager,' the men cried, 'help us before it is too late.'

But Meleager said, 'Why should I fight, when my mother prays that my life shall be ended ?'

Althaea said nothing, but continued to stand by the fire, so that no one should take away the wood that was burning. Then Meleager's father, Oeneus, came up and begged him to save the country.

'What shall I do, Cleopatra ?' Meleager asked his wife. 'Go with them and fight,' answered Cleopatra. 'Your country is more important to you than your life.'

Meleager looked once at his mother, whose eyes were turned towards the fire, then kissed his wife and called to the soldiers to follow him to battle.

Althaea and Cleopatra stayed in the room, watching the wood burn away. In a few hours nothing of it was left. News came that the Calydon army had completely beaten the enemy. Meleager had died ; his life came to an end just at the moment that the piece of wood burned up.

VI

ATALANTA'S RACE

Found by some hunters

ATALANTA, loved by Meleager, was the daughter of King Schoeneus. When Atalanta was born, her father was so angry at not having a son that he told his servants to take the child into the woods and leave it to die. The baby was found by a bear, who took it to live with her own young one. One day the bear was killed by some hunters, who picked up the child and cared for her in their own house. She grew up to be a true hunter, while she was able to run so fast that no man in the country could equal her.

Several years passed, and King Schoeneus had no more children. He wished to see his long-lost daughter, but feared that she was dead. One day Atalanta came back to the city and the king heard of her strange story. He sent for her, and took her gladly into his house, for he knew she must be his own daughter.

Now Atalanta had reached the age when she should marry, but she said that she would have no man who could not beat her in a race. Any man who tried and failed should lose his life. Many men ran the race and they all lost their lives, for none could run fast enough.

One day a young hunter called Milanion came to the city of King Schoeneus. There were crowds of people in the streets, and he followed them to a large open space around which people were sitting. In the space were two persons, just about to start a race. One of them was a young man, tall and good-looking, who was very excited. The other was a beautiful fair girl, quiet and untroubled. She was Atalanta.

The race

The race started. At first the two runners kept side by side, then one could see that the boy was becoming tired. The people shouted to encourage him, but still he could not catch Atalanta. Atalanta gained more and more, until at the end she ran in well in front of him. Then Milanion understood why the people had been encouraging the young man. When the race was finished, Atalanta walked away quietly, but the young man was led up to a swordsman, who cut off his head.

The crowd of people went away sadly, but Milanion could think only of Atalanta and her beauty. He knew that he was in love with her

and that he was willing to run in the terrible race.

The young man went to King Schoeneus and said, 'I wish to marry your daughter, King Schoeneus, for she is very beautiful.'

The King, who was a kind man, said, 'Must you, too, Milanion, lose your life? For you know that Atalanta will marry no one who cannot beat her in a race. So many young men have tried, but none can run as fast as she. Do you, also, wish to die?'

'No, King, I do not wish to die,' answered Milanion, 'but I believe that I can beat Atalanta in the race, if you will let me try.'

'Be it as you wish,' said the King sadly, 'the race shall take place in a month's time.'

Milanion goes to the temple

Milanion decided to spend the month going from one *temple*[1] to another, asking the gods to help him. One day he came to a temple of Aphrodite, on the seashore of Argolis. Here he brought wonderful presents to the goddess of love, and prayed her to help him. Many hours passed, while Milanion waited. When the sun set, a great, pink, shining cloud came out of the south. Aphrodite was on her way to her temple. Milanion hid his eyes, for he could not bear to look at anything so bright.

A lovely, clear voice came from the cloud,

1 temple *n.* = a building where prayers are said to a god.

saying, 'Your prayers to Aphrodite have been heard and the goddess will help you. Go out, and on the steps of the temple you will find three *apples* of pure gold. Carry these with you in the race and drop one of them ; Atalanta will be sure to step aside and pick it up.'



ATALANTA AND MILANION

Milanion went out of the temple and there on the ground he found the three lovely apples.

At last the day of the race arrived. The crowds who came to watch wondered to see the young man so full of hope, for how could anyone run faster than Atalanta ? Atalanta herself looked

at Milanion and for the first time felt that she would not be sorry to lose the race. But when the race started, she forgot everything but the wonderful speed which the goddess Diana had given her.

The golden apples

In a few minutes she was running in front of Milanion, when suddenly she saw a most lovely golden apple rolling across her path. She could not pass such a beautiful thing by, so Atalanta stopped a moment to pick it up. Milanion was now some distance in front of her, so she ran as fast as she could and soon caught up with him. Another golden apple rolled past her. Atalanta remembered that she had lost very little time by taking the first one, so she stopped to fetch the second. Once again she managed to catch Milanion up, without much difficulty. They were now coming near to the winning-post.

The crowd watched in a state of great excitement. It did not think that Milanion could possibly win. Just at the last moment, the third golden apple was thrown down. A third time Atalanta stopped, but when she started to run again, Milanion had passed the winning-post. A great noise came from the crowd, which was shouting for joy. Atalanta walked slowly up to Milanion, who was waiting happily for her. She put her hand in his and knew that she was glad to be beaten at last.

VII

THE STORY OF PERSEUS

The tower of brass

ACRISINE, the King of Argos in Greece, had an only daughter, Danae by name. Danae grew up to be a girl of great beauty and Acrisine watched her with a heavy heart, for an oracle had once said that Danae's son would kill his grandfather and become King of Argos. Danae reached the age when she should be married, and Acrisine determined to keep all men away from her. He therefore built a high, smooth tower of shining *brass*,[1] that stood on the edge of the sea. Danae and her ladies were delighted by the look of the strange tower and wondered for whom it was prepared.

One day they were taken to see it ; the lower half had no windows, but was filled with a great store of food and drink. At the top of the tower were several lovely rooms, beautifully furnished. The young women wandered about, admiring everything they saw, when suddenly strange noises came from below ; the little door through which they had entered was shut and the key was thrown away so that they were prisoners in the tower of brass. For many days they cried to be let go ; no one came near them but a *deaf*[2] and *dumb*[3] slave who brought fresh milk and fruit, to be drawn up in a basket.

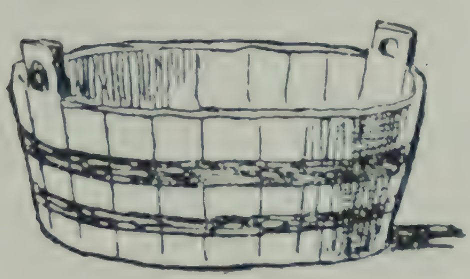
1 brass *n.* = a yellow metal formed of copper and tin.
2 deaf *adj.* = unable to hear.
3 dumb *adj.* = unable to speak.

5

All day long Danae sat at her window, looking out to sea. She felt *lonely*[1] and longed to talk with someone from the outside world. One day, feeling especially unhappy, she prayed to the gods to free her from her prison. The prayer did not go unanswered. Danae fell asleep and Zeus came to her in a dream. Surrounded by golden light, he gently told her that she would have a little son, with whom she could escape from the tower. The boy was to be called Perseus, and in years to come he would become very famous. Danae awoke from her sleep feeling happy again ; she knew that the gods would protect her.

Danae is put to sea

After a few months, news was brought to Acrisine that Danae had a little son. Acrisine was angry and afraid ; he fetched Danae and the baby from the tower, put them in a wooden *tub* and pushed them out to sea during a terrible storm. No one thought that they could live, but Zeus did not forget Danae. He sent a soft wind that blew the tub gently across the sea and landed it on the shore of the island of Seriphos.



The tub was found by a fisherman called Dictys, who rescued the two half-dead passengers. He took them to his house where he fed and clothed them and asked them to live with him.

1 lonely *adv.* = sad at being alone.

Danae gladly said 'yes', and the boy Perseus grew up as if he were Dictys's own son.

Now Dictys was of *royal*[1] blood, although he was only a fisherman. His brother Polydectes was King of Seriphos. When Polydectes saw the lovely visitor at the house of his brother, he wished to marry her. 'If you will marry me,' he said to Danae, 'you shall be Queen of Seriphos. I will give you riches and a beautiful house. You shall have everything you want.'

'I cannot marry you,' answered Danae, 'for I do not love you. I wish to spend my life with Perseus, my son.'

Many times did Polydectes ask her, and many times did Danae refuse him, but the King gave her no peace.

Polydectes and Perseus

Perseus, who was growing up, disliked Polydectes. Polydectes was always kind to Perseus, in order to please Danae, but really he wished that Perseus would leave Seriphos. He thought a great deal about his dislike for Perseus, and at length thought out a plan to send the young man away.

Perseus was invited to a *banquet*[2] and Polydectes asked if he would be willing to do anything that was asked of him. The boy took the question as a joke, and agreed. Then Polydectes

1 royal *adj.* = of a king or queen.
2 banquet *n.* = a rich meal.

suddenly said, 'Fetch me the head of Medusa, the *Gorgon*.'[1]

Perseus thought that the king was only joking, but now discovered that he was serious.

To obtain Medusa's head was regarded as an impossibility. Nobody knew where Medusa lived. All that they knew was that she was a creature with a terrible but lovely face, snakes for hair, and wings like some great bird's. She lived with her two sisters, somewhere near the garden of Hesperides. So terrible was the head and face of Medusa that all who saw it were at once turned into stone.

Perseus realized that Polydectes wished to kill him, and he felt hopeless at the difficulties in front of him. Wandering home along the edge of the sea, he was wondering sadly how to begin his search when suddenly he saw in front of him a splendid woman in clothes of shining silver. Light streamed from her head and her bright grey eyes nearly blinded him. Perseus bowed down, for he knew that he was in the presence of Athene, the goddess of learning.

Athene speaks to Perseus

'Perseus,' said Athene, 'the gods love you and they are willing to help you. Take, therefore, these presents. Here is a *helmet*[2]. He who wears it cannot be seen by anyone else. Put these *sandals* on your feet, and you can fly over land

1 The Gorgons *n.* = three evil goddesses.

2 See the illustration on p. 64 of perseus carrying the helmet in his hand, with the sandals on his feet, and the shield on his back.

and sea. To protect yourself, here is a curved sword and a shining *shield*. Now fly to the north until you come to the home of the Graiae.' So saying, Athene disappeared.

Perseus felt much happier now. With all these presents from the gods, he felt sure that he would win the gorgon's head.

He went to say good-bye to his mother and advised her to go to the temple of Athene, where Polydectes could not attack her.

Then he put on the sandals and sailed into the air. He flew over Greece, over the great forests and plains of Central Europe until he came to the northern sea. Farther and farther he flew until he reached a land beyond the light of the sun, a grey land, full of mist and icy rain. This was the country of the Graiae, three awful old women who had never seen the light of day. They had only one eye and one tooth between them, which they handed round and used in turn. The Graiae alone knew where the awful gorgons lived. Athene had told Perseus to steal the single eye and so force the grey sisters to tell him the way.

The three grey women

Perseus flew up quietly behind the three sisters, who were sitting together singing a sad song. One of them heard him and cried, 'Give me the eye, sister, that I may kill him,' Perseus quickly took the eye as it was being handed from one sister to another. At first the Graiae could not understand what had happened.

They cried, 'Give me the eye, give me the eye,' until Perseus asked them where he should find the gorgons. Then they began to cry again.

'You cannot go to the gorgons,' they said, 'if you look at them, you will be turned into stone at once.' 'No,' said Perseus, 'I shall not be turned into stone. Tell me where to find the gorgons, or I shall throw your eye away, and you will never be able to see again.' Then at last, the sisters described the long and difficult journey that he must make.

Perseus handed back the eye and put on his flying sandals once more. This time he flew south until the land came to an end and he was in the Kingdom of Night, a dark and awful plain surrounded by the endless sea. In the middle of the plain he saw three women. Two were asleep and the third was walking up and down, crying. Perseus knew that he had found the gorgons at last; Sthenno and Euryale were dreadful old women, whilst Medusa's beautiful face and form was covered with snakes.

Perseus cuts Medusa's head off

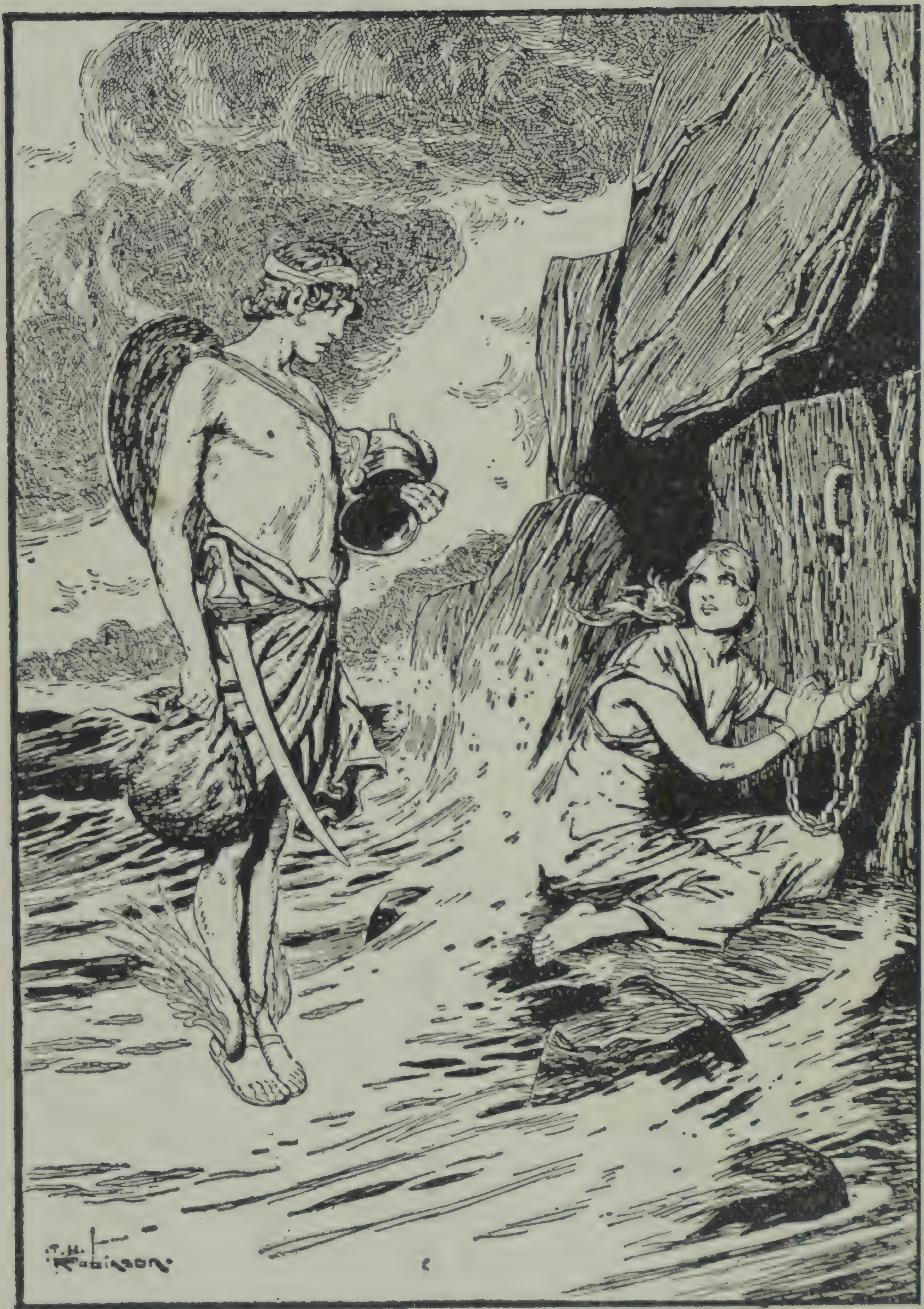
Perseus put on the helmet that made him invisible. He knew that he must not look at Medusa's face, or he would be turned into stone, so he watched her *reflection*[1] in his bright shield and, with one blow of his sword, cut off the lovely, dreadful head and put it into his bag. Medusa

1 reflection *n.* = picture of something seen in any bright object.

died with a fearful *shriek*[1] on her lips, and the two sisters rose to run after Perseus, but he was too fast for them. He went westward until he came to Ethiopia, where he flew along the coast. On one of the high black rocks was something white that seemed to be alive, and he flew down to look at it. Perseus was surprised and angry to find a lovely young girl *chained* to the rock at the edge of the sea. Her face was full of fear and she cried without stopping. Perseus, wearing his helmet of invisibility, watched her with the greatest interest; he determined to hear her story and set her free. Taking off the helmet, he said to her gently, 'Who are you, and why are you here?'

'My name is Andromeda,' said the girl, 'and I am the daughter of King Cepheus and Queen Cassiopeia. One day my mother unwisely said that I was more beautiful than the children of Nereus. Poseidon, the sea-god, determined to punish the Queen for saying that. He caused the sea to rise higher and higher every day, until half the country was under water. Then came a terrible monster, which started to destroy the land. The King, my father, was in great fear, and asked the oracle how he should free himself of the monster. The oracle replied that the monster would completely destroy the land and the people, unless I were given to it to be eaten. The King, my father, was broken-hearted to think of losing his daughter by such terrible

1 shriek *n.* = a high, loud cry.



PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA

means, but he knew that it was the only way to save his people. So I was brought to the shore and chained to the rocks, and soon I must die,' said the poor girl. And she started to cry again.

Perseus saves Andromeda

As Andromeda finished speaking, the monster rose from the sea with a great noise and rushed at her. Perseus swiftly cut the chains that held Andromeda ; he drew the gorgon's head from his bag and held it in front of the monster's face. Slowly the monster turned into stone and sank to the bottom of the sea with a huge splash. Perseus returned to Andromeda. They were very happy at her escape and, as they looked into each other's eyes, they knew that they loved each other.

Cepheus and Cassiopeia were in the castle crying, for they never expected to see their daughter again. Great was their surprise and joy when Perseus and Andromeda returned from the sea-shore. Cepheus said to the young man, 'You have saved our daughter from the monster. How can we ever pay you for such a service?' Then Perseus replied, 'You can pay me, King Cepheus, by giving me your daughter in marriage, for I love her.'

'You shall marry her at once, and we will have a great banquet,' replied Cepheus.

Perseus and Andromeda were married and set sail for Seriphos the day after the marriage.

Meanwhile, in Seriphos, Polydectes, thinking

that Perseus had been killed, never left Danae in peace. The unhappy woman had gone to the temple of Athene but the king had followed her there. Perseus found him, with a band of soldiers, about to seize Danae by force. Polydectes ordered his followers to kill Perseus, but Perseus drew from his bag the head of Medusa and held it up before them. They looked in fear at the terrible head and felt their bodies becoming still and cold.

Polydectes turned into stone

All in the temple were turned into stone except Dictys and Danae. Dictys became King of Seriphos, and Perseus set sail with Danae and Andromeda for Argos. During the voyage a storm arose and the vessel was driven on to the shores of Thessaly. At Larissa great games were being held, and the King invited Perseus to take part in them. Perseus entered for the *discus throwing.* In the evening he threw the discus very far; it turned from the course and hit another man. Perseus ran to see whether the man was hurt, and found him dead. The crowd told Perseus that he had killed Acrisine, the King of Argos, his grandfather. In this way the *prophecy*[1] became true,



[1] prophecy *n.* = future told by an oracle.

and Perseus was now King of Argos. But he would not rule over the land of a man whom he had killed, so he offered the kingdom to Megapanthes, who gave him the land of Tiryns instead. There Perseus built the city of Mycenae and lived happily with Andromeda for the rest of his life.

VIII

BELLEROPHON AND PEGASUS

The flying horse

When Perseus cut off the head of Medusa the Gorgon, some drops of blood fell on to the ground and were turned by the gods into a most lovely white horse with wings, called Pegasus. Pegasus flew into the air, over land and sea, until he came to Corinth.

When the young men of Corinth saw the beautiful horse they all wished to catch it, but none could do so, for the moment they came close to it, the horse flew away. After a time no one kept on trying to catch the horse except for one boy called Bellerophon, the son of the King of Corinth. Bellerophon was determined to catch the wonderful white horse. He wanted him more than anything in the world. He tried many times to catch Pegasus, but could not even come near to him. At length he went to a wise man called Polyidos and asked him what to do.

Polyidos advised him to spend the night in the temple of Athene and ask for the goddess's help. Bellerophon went to the temple and, when he had fallen asleep, the goddess came to him in a dream and said, 'Bellerophon, here is a golden *bridle*.[1] With it you may catch the winged horse.' Bellerophon awoke and found the golden bridle beside him. He went out and soon found Pegasus drinking at a stream. Bellerophon came quietly up to the horse, which allowed him to put the golden bridle over its head. He then jumped on its back. The horse was frightened and angry. It jumped into the air and tried to throw Bellerophon off its back, but it could not. At last Pegasus realized that he had found his master and from then onwards he stayed with Bellerophon. The horse and the boy together flew over many strange lands which Bellerophon could not otherwise have seen.

Bellerophon goes to Tiryns

After some time Bellerophon had a fight with a well-known man in Corinth and killed him, so that he had to leave the country, and flew with Pegasus to Troezen. There the king's daughter fell in love with him, but just as they were going to be married, men came from Corinth to tell the king that Bellerophon had killed a man, so he was obliged to leave Troezen. Bellerophon and Pegasus then went to the Court of King Proetus at Tiryns. Proetus was very

1 See the picture opposite the title page.

kind to Bellerophon and let him live in the castle. At first he was very happy there, but after some time he noticed that the Queen Sthenoboea was falling in love with him. Bellerophon did all he could to prevent this happening, for he did not love Sthenoboea, but one day she came to him and said, 'Bellerophon, let us run away from Tiryns together and leave Proetus.' Bellerophon was very angry with her.

'We cannot possibly do that,' he said. 'How can I behave in such a way to your husband, the King, when he has been so kind to me? You must think no more about it.' And he turned away from her.

Sthenoboea at first could scarcely believe that Bellerophon would refuse her. Then she, too, became very angry. 'If you will not do as I wish,' she said, 'I shall harm you in some way.' She therefore went to her husband and said, 'Do you know that your guest, Bellerophon, has tried to take me away from you?'

Bellerophon is sent to kill a monster

The King was extremely angry and at first wanted to kill Bellerophon. He did not dare to do so and sent him instead to Sthenoboea's father, Iobates of Lycia, with a letter telling what he was supposed to have done. Bellerophon rode off to Lycia and gave the letter to Iobates. He did not know, of course, what was in it. The King read the letter, and was surprised to see

the young man looking so *calm*.[1] 'You must go, Bellerophon,' he said, 'and kill a terrible monster called the Chimaera that lives near here, The Chimaera has the body of a goat, the head of a lion, and the tail of a snake, and fire comes out of its mouth. If you do not kill it, you may not return here.'

Without Pegasus, Bellerophon would have been killed and eaten by the Chimaera. He jumped on the horse and took a very long sword in his hand. They flew very low over the monster and, when it was not looking, Bellerophon struck his sword right through it, so that it fell dead. Then he came back and told King Iobates, who was again very surprised. Bellerophon was the first man to come back alive after meeting the Chimaera, and now Iobates heard that the animal was dead. He tried several other means of killing Bellerophon, but without succeeding, so he decided that the gods did not wish the boy to be destroyed.

Iobates called Bellerophon and asked him several questions about his life. Bellerophon told him how Athene had helped him to catch the winged horse. Iobates then showed him the letter written by Proetus. Bellerophon was very angry at the cruel things that were written in it, and said, 'You must know yourself, King Iobates, that none of these things are true. Would the gods have helped me if I had behaved

1 calm *adj.* = quiet.

thus? I can never forgive Sthenoboea for what she has done to me.'

Bellerophon returns to Sthenoboea

That night Bellerophon jumped on Pegasus's back and they flew together back to Tiryns. The boy spent the first few days quietly in the city, but Proetus and Sthenoboea heard that he had returned, and they were afraid. Sthenoboea saw nothing of Bellerophon for some time, but one day when she was walking in her garden and looked up at the sky, she saw something that looked like a golden cloud. The cloud came nearer and nearer until the Queen saw that it was a great white horse flying through the air, with Bellerophon on its back. The horse flew round the garden several times and then came down on the grass. Sthenoboea ran towards it, for she was happy and thought that Bellerophon had come to take her away with him.

Bellerophon did not say anything to her—he did not even smile, but pointed to the horse, as if telling her to get on its back.

When the Queen was on the horse, she waited for Bellerophon to come up behind her, but instead he looked at her for a minute and then said something to Pegasus. Suddenly Sthenoboea felt herself rising through the air. She cried out to Bellerophon, 'Stop the horse! Stop the horse!' but he said nothing. Then the Queen was really afraid, for she realized what Belle-

rophon had done to her. Higher and higher flew the horse until Sthenoboea, looking down, saw that they were over the sea. Pegasus flew down towards the water. Suddenly he turned round so quickly that Sthenoboea could no longer hold on to his back. With a loud cry she fell into the sea and was *drowned*.[1]

The end of Bellerophon

Bellerophon returned to Lycia. He said nothing of what had happened, and King Iobates did not dare to ask him. Bellerophon married the daughter of the King and had three children. But he was never happy, for he never loved anyone. The older he became, the more he avoided people and the more he disliked friends. For days he would walk about in the fields, speaking to no one and wondering how he could escape from this world.

So one day he took Pegasus, and told him to fly so high that the earth would be out of sight. Higher and higher they flew till they came to the gates of Mount Olympus. But Zeus was angry that any human being should dare to do such a thing, so he sent a fly to bite Pegasus. The horse jumped so suddenly that Bellerophon was thrown. Falling from such a height, he was dead before he reached the earth.

Zeus took the winged horse and kept him in his *stables*[2] on Mount Olympus.

1 drown *v.* = kill by water.
2 stable *n.* = building in which horses are kept.

IX

HOW HORATIUS HELD THE BRIDGE

The rulers of Rome

THE great city of Rome, which was the centre of the ancient world, was ruled by kings for the first two hundred and fifty years after it was built. The kings came from different families, which were changed from time to time. The kings who came from a family called Tarquin were cruel and ruled so badly that the Romans became tired of them and decided that, in future, they would have a *republic*.[1]

King Tarquin went to another king, called Lars Porsena, and asked him to fight the Romans. If he won, he was to make them take Tarquin back as king once more. Lars Porsena considered the matter for some time. For a long while he had feared Rome because of its strength and riches, and he would have liked to destroy it, but he did not tell this to Tarquin. He sent messages to several other Italian states and asked if they would help him to destroy Rome. The other states felt very much the same as Lars Porsena, for they all feared that Rome would soon conquer them and become the most powerful state in the world.

1 republic *n.* = country ruled by the people themselves, not by a king.

The attack on Rome

Therefore many of the states brought their men to Lars Porsena, and a great army of ninety thousand men was collected to march on Rome. It was all done so cleverly and quietly that the Romans knew nothing of the danger until the army was quite close to them. They would soon have been conquered, but for one fact. Rome was on one side of the river Tiber, and the enemy was on the other side. At that time the only way of crossing the river was by a narrow wooden bridge. The Romans, when they heard that the army was coming to attack them, realized that their only hope was to cut down the bridge and prevent the enemy from coming closer to the city.

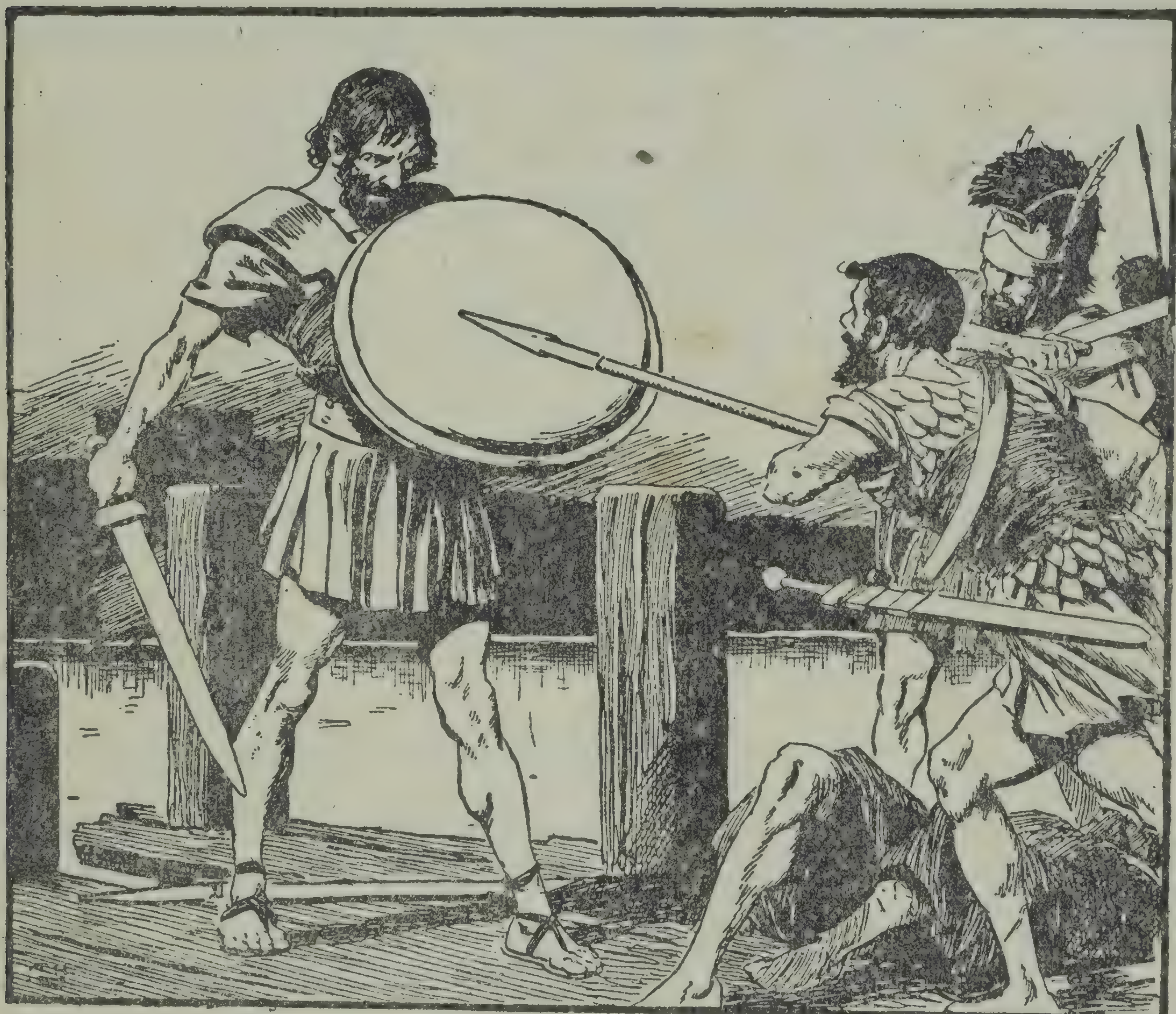
The enemy could not cross in boats, for the river was too fast and they would be carried away. The Romans began to cut down the bridge, when suddenly they saw the enemy on the other bank. It was not easy to cut down the strong bridge very quickly, and the Romans were frightened that the enemy would still manage to cross the bridge before it was destroyed.

Horatius guards the bridge

Then a Roman soldier called Horatius offered to go, with two other men, to the other side of the bridge and keep the enemy away, while the Romans cut it down. This could be done because the only way to the bridge was down a

narrow path between rocks, where not more than three men could walk side by side.

It was very brave of Horatius and the other two men, Herminius and Spurius Lartius, to suggest this, for they would almost certainly be killed. Even if they were not, it would be



HORATIUS DEFENDING THE BRIDGE

difficult for them to escape, once the bridge was cut down, because they would be on the wrong side of the river. However, they did not think of the danger, but stood on the far side of the bridge, while the Romans cut down the near end.

The enemy was now at the bridge and they laughed to see that only three Romans were trying to guard it. Some of them got off their horses and came to attack Horatius and the other two men. They were killed at once by the Romans. For a few minutes the enemy stood still, wondering what to do. Then one of their chiefs, a very tall man called Astur, came up to Horatius with a great sword in his hand and tried to kill him. Horatius was a little too quick for him, but was hurt in the leg. In spite of the pain, he turned and struck his sword through Astur's face, so that the man fell dead at once.

Meanwhile the Romans were cutting down the bridge as fast as they could. It was now almost down.

The bridge falls

The Romans shouted to Horatius to escape while he could. Herminius and Spurius Lartius turned round quickly and ran over the bridge, which fell into the river with a great noise a moment after they had passed. Horatius was left on the other side of the river. The Romans watched in a state of great excitement. Would he be killed, or would he manage to escape? Horatius was badly hurt and they were very much afraid that he would not be able to move quickly enough. However, Horatius turned away suddenly and jumped into the river. The river was moving fast and Horatius had all his

clothes on, so it was very difficult for him to swim. But he was a strong man, and the Romans, watching from the bank, saw him swim slowly across the quickly-moving water. At length he reached the bank, where many friendly hands were ready to pull him out.

The enemy, seeing now that they could not cross the river, went home again. Horatius was carried in *triumph*[1] to the city, and he always remained one of the greatest heroes of Rome.

1 triumph *n.* = joy at great success

I. Describe briefly how was able to diffed at atanta and marry her? (Atlanta Race)